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U.S. discloses secret plan by Sandinistas

Disinformation campaign aimed at vote on Contras

By Mary Belcher
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Administration officials say they have secret information that Nicaragua's Sandinista government will wage a sophisticated lobbying effort against President Reagan's request for \$100 million in aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes said the campaign is out-

lined in a document. He declined to comment on its contents because the information is classified, but said it includes "elements of disinformation."

Representatives of the Nicaraguan government immediately denied the existence of such a document and plans for a disinformation campaign.

"The Nicaraguans are not running any kind of a CIA campaign in

the United States," said Darryl Hunt, president of Agendas International, which handles public relations for the Nicaraguan government in the United States. "To say there is a disinformation campaign going on is ridiculous."

Francisco Campbell, minister-counselor for political affairs at the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington, said his government will continue to apprise Congress "of the facts."

"There is no such document as Mr. Speakes refers to," Mr. Campbell said. "What we do intend to do is present the facts of the state terrorism against Nicaragua to the American people."

But Rep. Robert Dornan, one of a number of congressmen who met with the president yesterday, said the classified document is a "very interesting piece of paper."

"This is being organized out of Managua, out of Cuba and out of Moscow," said Mr. Dornan, California Republican. He said the information was so detailed that he could predict what slogans would be used in organized protests against the president's request for rebel aid.

A senior administration official said the Sandinista lobbying effort "goes beyond" the campaigns typically waged by countries seeking foreign aid on Capitol Hill.

"We're not talking about putting out brochures that say, 'Come visit Nicaragua,'" said the official, who spoke to reporters on the condition that he not be identified.

"What you have here is a communist government, allied to the Soviet Union, undertaking a very well-organized effort, with the help of certain Americans, to change a vote in Congress," the official said.

"In other words, they do not want Congress to consider this without the impact of a hostile communist

government affecting the vote," he said.

Administration officials have been briefing members of Congress this week on Mr. Reagan's request for \$70 million in military aid and \$30 million in non-military assistance for the anti-Sandinista rebels. The aid would cover an 18-month period beginning April 1.

The officials hinted strongly that the Marxist Sandinista government is employing subtle methods to manipulate press reports on Nicaragua.

"There is a difference between countering what appears to be an opinion in the air or a press story and making people aware of the fact that this does not come from disinterested sources," the senior official said. "It comes from the government of Nicaragua."

The classified information the administration has obtained shows

"tremendous sophistication" on the part of the Sandinistas, the senior official said. "It knows how to deal with Congress, which buttons to press to produce the results they [the Sandinistas] want on the Hill."

Rep. Claude Pepper, a Florida Democrat who attended yesterday's session with the president, said the White House presented "good evidence" that there is a "concerted effort" on the part of the Sandinistas to discredit the president's aid request.

He said the Nicaraguan government will try to convince Congress

that its coffee crop is good, its economic problems are solved and that the rebel forces are dwindling.

House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. said yesterday he remains opposed to increased aid for the rebels.

But, Mr. O'Neill said, "I'm not happy with what [Nicaraguan leader Daniel] Ortega's doing down there."

"I still believe in my heart the way to do it is through the [negotiating] system," said Mr. O'Neill, Massachusetts Democrat.

The senior administration official, who spoke to reporters yesterday, indicated that the classified information also names names of Americans who will assist the Nicaraguan government in its lobbying effort.

"Unfortunately, due to the privacy act, even if we declassify the document, we would not declassify the names," he said.

Although White House officials yesterday clearly wanted to air the news that they had information pointing to an elaborate Sandinista lobbying effort, they refused to say what kinds of groups, individuals or activities were named in the information.

The senior official said the administration was grappling with the "usual problem" of the White House and State Department wanting to make the matter public and intelligence agencies wanting to keep it private to protect sources and methods of intelligence.

Roy Godson, a Georgetown University expert on intelligence and disinformation, said it "is not surprising" that "the Soviet-Cuban complex is trying to affect American perceptions" of Nicaragua.

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He said he had not seen the administration's classified document and did not know details of the alleged Sandinista campaign.

In general, he said, the press is the target of Soviet-backed disinformation efforts. Among the tactics typically employed are deliberately leaked but fraudulent documents and bribes to influential members of the foreign media.

As Mr. Reagan seeks to resume military aid to Nicaraguan rebels, the human rights record of both the Sandinista government and the rebels came under attack by a private church-supported human rights group. The group in the past has been critical of U.S. support for the rebels.

The group's report, compiled by Mary Dutcher, a former Missouri assistant attorney general, charges the Sandinistas with "systematic" atrocities last year, including murder, rape and mutilations.

The study, citing 197 sworn statements, also accuses Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government of other human rights violations, although adding that they "appear to be relatively isolated cases."